

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES
FOR RESPONSE TO AND PREVENTION OF CLERGY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT
BY PERSONS ENGAGED IN MINISTRY
IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN GEORGIA**

ADOPTED BY THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY NOVEMBER 12, 2011

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Because we are the Body of Christ, a witness to God’s presence in the world, we are stewards of a sacred responsibility to ensure the wholeness and health of congregations and their members. This policy is established to respond to clergy sexual misconduct, actions which violate the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in the “Ministerial Code of Ethics” of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It is also established in response to the adoption by the 2009 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of “Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).” This policy states, “It is the responsibility of each Region to have specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers with standing in the Region.”¹

Upon approval by the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia, this Policy and Procedures will replace the existing “Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures for Response.”

SECTION II: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Reflecting upon the life and teachings of Jesus Christ for guidance and inspiration, we are reminded that what unites us is a common commitment to love God and love our neighbors in ways which reflect the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

- ***1 Corinthians 12: 26***

“If one member suffers all suffer together with them, if one member rejoices all rejoice with them.”

As the Body of Christ, we are called to live out our lives as an inclusive welcoming church that embodies the Body of Christ. When we have people in the church at risk from sexual misconduct, we have fallen short of our own responsibility to each of us as the church, the Body of Christ. Women are disproportionately the victims of sexual abuse and exploitation in the church and when the church is silent on this issue, we participate in the act of sexual misconduct and send out a clear message that women are less than full participants in the Body. But scripture reminds us of our connectedness and responsibility to our wholeness as the bodies within the Body of Christ.

- ***Romans 12:5***

“So, we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.” The church has a pervasive commitment to protect its members and live in justice, creating a church culture which is a safe sanctuary for all. The church has a particular responsibility to protect the vulnerable, the weak, and those who have a limited voice.

- ***Deuteronomy 10:19***

“You shall also love the stranger, for you were also a stranger in the land of Egypt.”

- ***Isaiah 61:1-2***

“The Spirit of God is upon me; because God has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to build up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the God’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.”

The church is called to denounce injustice and protect the safety and well-being of each member of the body. Perhaps the most famous promise in all Christendom is heard in the 23rd Psalm where the Psalmist expresses confidence in God’s protection when the Psalmist concludes that “I shall dwell in the house of God forever.”

We are called to be stewards and protectors of safety, wholeness, and wellbeing for each part of the Body of Christ. People want and need assurance that there is some place of safety here on earth and beyond. It is no accident that the worship space in a church is called a sanctuary – a place of refuge, of hope, and of safety. For hundreds of years the church, the sanctuary, was a sacred space.

When Jesus overturned the tables in the temple, he made a powerful gesture to declare the sanctity of the places where people gather in religious community. As people of the Good News, congregations are called to provide places of safety and sanctuary for the people of God. Spiritual growth and development require absolute security and trust. The abundant expressions and experiences of religious life are nurtured and encouraged when all who seek God can do so free of the threat of injury or harm. When sanctuary is compromised, the journeys and healings of faith are restrained.

- ***Amos 5:24***

“But let justice roll down like a mighty river and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.”

- ***Micah 6:8***

“God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does God require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?”

Justice is offered as a means of healing and restoration where the promise of God is at hand.

SECTION III: POLICY ON CLERGY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

A. Introduction

Clergy sexual misconduct includes a range of inappropriate behaviors defined as but not limited to sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/or sexual abuse, such as rape or sexual contact by force or intimidation. The behavior may or may not include touching; however, any sexual behavior between an adult and a minor is always considered sexual abuse.

Clergy sexual misconduct is primarily a result of any authorized minister choosing to engage in sexual contact with his/her parishioners, clients, students, colleagues, volunteers and those the minister supervises or serves in a professional capacity within or outside the church. Such behavior crosses appropriate professional boundaries and is an abuse of trust placed in the responsibility and privilege of the pastoral role. Such conduct violates ministerial ethics and provides the basis for disciplinary action to be taken. In all instances the minister is responsible for maintaining professional boundaries.

It is the policy of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia that any complaints made concerning clergy sexual misconduct need to be firsthand accounts, not based on rumor or innuendo. In addition, while verbal complaints may be made, for the process of investigation to begin in earnest, all complaints will be required to be submitted in writing.

For the purposes of the process of investigation and adjudication of sexual misconduct concerning ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia, a Complainant is defined as any person who initiates a verbal complaint or submits a signed written complaint with specifics of the alleged inappropriate behavior to the Regional Minister (or Chair of the Commission on Ministry). The complainant may or may not be the victim. For the purposes of this document, the term "Complainant" is also understood to include the alleged victim. After the process is underway, the Complainant is understood to be the alleged victim, or in the case of a minor, his/her parents or guardian.

This policy applies to all ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia. When one party has a ministerial/professional relationship towards the other, or stands in a position of authority over the other, even an apparently consensual sexual relationship may lead to sexual harassment or other breaches of professional obligations. The policy prohibits all credentialed ministers from pursuing sexual relationships with employees, parishioners, clients, students, and volunteers.

B. Unacceptable Conduct

1. Sexual Exploitation: Sexual contact or activity (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the church, institution or related organization or ministry takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

2. Sexual Harassment: Generally defined to include coercive or repeated sexual advances towards another person contrary to their wishes, unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, request for sexual favors and/or other verbal, written, electronic or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In ministry settings it includes using sexual behavior to control, influence or affect the salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another person. It includes behavior directed to another person's sexuality or sexual orientation, with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, embarrassing or discriminating against the other person. It also includes sexual advances with have an effect on the other person's employment, including situations in which:

- Submission to such conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly terms or conditions of an individual's employment or status in a program or activity.
- Submission or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or other decisions affecting such individual.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or participation in the organization's programs; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working and/or participation environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a program or activity.

Sexual Harassment includes:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, electronic-mail, notes or invitations.
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggested or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual orientation or sexual propositions.
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, and coercing sexual intercourse.

- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another’s body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters or magazines.

Sexual harassment does not include actions that a minister may take to counsel, admonish, or reprove another person for sexual misconduct. It also does not include fair disciplinary actions that a minister may take that are in accordance with the policies and procedures of the minister’s congregation.

It is unethical to:

- Suggest, imply or threaten that failure to accept a request, date, sexual advance, or sexual intimacy will affect an individual’s employment prospects, church leadership or comfortable participation in the life of the church.
- Either imply or withhold support for an appointment, promotion or change of assignment based on an individual’s response to a sexual overture.
- Suggest that a poor performance report will be given because an individual has declined a sexual proposition.
- Hint that benefits such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

3. Child Sexual Abuse: Generally understood as sexual contact, activity, behavior or interaction between an adult and a child/minor. (For the purposes of this policy, a “minor” is defined as anyone under 18 years old.) Sexual behavior directed towards children/minors includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/or sexual abuse, such as rape or sexual contact by force or intimidation. The behavior may or may not include touching; however, any sexual behavior between a minor and an adult is always considered forced.

C. Dating within the congregation has the potential for misconduct and thus transparency with supervisors and congregational leaders is essential. Refer to Section VI for further information.

SECTION IV: PROCEDURES

A. Introduction

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia establishes this policy and outlines the following procedures so that Regional representatives can respond appropriately when clergy whose standing is certified by the Regional Commission on Ministry are charged with sexual misconduct.

B. Response Team

1. The Regional Minister shall appoint and facilitate the training of a standing Response Team, composed at least eight persons, including both men and women. Ideally, the members of the Response Team shall come from each of the districts of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia.

In addition, as much as is practical, the Response Team should include trained counselors, those conversant in the area of conflict management, a balance of lay and clergy, and racial and ethnic minority representation. The Regional Minister shall be an ex-officio member of the team and kept regularly informed of the team's work, but will not chair the team.

The members of the response team will be appointed for three-year terms, with the possibility of renewal at the end of each term. The Regional Minister will appoint the Chair of the Response Team for a three-year term. All appointed members of this team should have completed a one-day training in the Prevention of Clergy Sexual Misconduct, as well as additional training specific to their responsibilities.

2. The investigation of a complaint is the sole responsibility of members of the Response Team, and it is the team's purpose to attempt to compile an objective record of the facts in the case. A written record will be kept of all proceedings, meetings, interviews and conversations, and a log will be kept of all related telephone calls, emails, and other communications.

C. Discovery and Reporting

1. Any person may submit a written, signed complaint to the Regional Minister charging misconduct by a minister. The initial complaint must be specific as to the alleged behavior.

In the case of admission or confession of misconduct to the Regional Minister, it is required that the Regional Minister set the response process in motion.

There may be instances in which an oral complaint is all that is received. In such cases, the Regional Minister must reduce the complaint to writing, which will then be signed by the complainant.

If the Regional Minister is the accused, complaints will be made to the Chair of the Commission on Ministry.

2. If the complaint involves allegations of adult sexual contact with a minor, or other criminal conduct, the Regional Minister will immediately report to law enforcement.

- a. The criminal investigation will take precedence over the church investigation and the Region will cooperate in every way possible with the criminal investigation.
 - b. If the criminal investigation results in an acquittal, the Regional Church will still proceed with its investigation to determine if Regional Church policy has been violated and thus requires disciplinary action.
3. There is no statute of limitations on receiving or investigating complaints of sexual misconduct in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia.
4. If ordained, licensed or commissioned clergy have knowledge of situations of clergy sexual abuse or misconduct, they are required to report such situations to the Regional Minister, per the “Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).”
5. The Regional Minister will notify the complainant in writing to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and the details of the process, and will verbally advise the complainant, the accused, and the church/organization regarding the discovery and reporting process.

A written copy of this Policy and Procedures for the Prevention of and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct will be immediately sent to the complainant, the accused, and the church/organization.

6. The Regional Minister will transmit the complaint to the chair of the Response Team within two (2) working days of the Regional Minister’s receipt of the complaint.
7. The chair of the Response Team will appoint two persons (one male, one female) from the Response Team to investigate the complaint. This subset of the Response Team will be known as the Investigation Team. The primary role of the Investigation Team is to create a complete record of the complaint, as well as the responses of the accused and congregational leadership.
8. The chair of the Response Team will appoint two additional members of the Response Team, one male and one female who are not serving as the Investigation team, to serve as support and information sources for the complainant, the accused, and congregational leadership. This subset of the Response Team will be known as the Intervention Team. The primary role of the Intervention Team will be to offer information regarding sources of support, guidance and assistance to the various parties.

D. Investigation and Intervention (Simultaneous Actions)

1. Investigation

- a. Within 45 days of receipt of the complaint, the Investigation Team will complete the investigation process and submit its report.
- b. The Investigation Team will obtain a signed written record of the complaint, complete with details of alleged misconduct, from the Regional Minister.
- c. The Team will then meet with the complainant.
- d. The Investigation Team next will meet with the accused minister. They will convey the details of the complaint and the accused minister will be given an opportunity to respond in writing to the charges. The minister's response will be recorded in a written record.
- e. The accused will be informed of the process as outlined in the Policy and Procedures for the Prevention of and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct.
- f. The Investigation Team will meet with the congregational leadership (or appropriate body/persons if the minister is in non-congregational ministry) to inform them that a complaint has been filed. They will be given a written set of the Policy and Procedures for the Prevention of and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct and will be advised regarding the process and potential for loss of standing and temporary revocation of standing by the Regional Minister. They will also solicit any information that congregational leadership might have regarding any allegations of misconduct against the accused minister and record this in a written record.
- g. The Investigation Team will interview other persons as deemed necessary to the investigation and document any such interviews in a written record.
- h. The complete report of the Investigation Team will be forwarded to the Regional Minister and the Commission on Ministry.

2. Intervention

As soon as is practical after the complaint has been received, and simultaneous to the investigation, the Intervention Team will arrange separate meetings with the complainant, the accused, and the congregational leadership.

a. Complainant

In their meeting with the complainant, the Intervention Team will inform him/her in detail of the process, as well as counseling options available through the Region for the complainant and his/her immediate family. Furthermore, in their meeting with the complainant, the Intervention Team will:

- Make it clear that no determination has yet been made and that an orderly investigation, review and adjudication of the matter is taking place.
- Provide explanation about the Policy and Procedures for Prevention of and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct that will be used in responding to this allegation, and about the process of providing follow-up information.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities for decision-making and action among the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia; the Regional Commission on Ministry, which grants standing to a minister; and the leaders in the local setting who maintain the authority to continue, terminate or suspend employment. The complainant should be informed that the Regional Minister has the authority to temporarily suspend the accused minister's standing pending the outcome of the adjudication process.

b. Accused Minister

In their meeting with the accused minister, the Intervention Team will inform him/her in detail of the process, as well as counseling options available through the Region for the accused and his/her immediate family. In addition, if the matter is likely to come before secular as well as ecclesial forums for adjudication, the accused will be informed of the legal issues that might be involved and the role that legal counsel would play as the issue is adjudicated. Furthermore, in their meeting with the accused, the Intervention Team will:

- Make it clear that no determination has yet been made and that an orderly investigation, review and adjudication of the matter is taking place.
- Provide explanation about the Policy and Procedures for Prevention of and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct that will be used in responding to this allegation, and about the process of providing follow-up information.

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities for decision-making and action among the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia; the Regional Commission on Ministry, which grants standing to a minister; and the leaders in the local setting who maintain the authority to continue, terminate or suspend employment. The accused minister should be informed that the Regional Minister has the authority to temporarily suspend the accused minister’s standing pending the outcome of the adjudication process.

c. Congregational Leadership

In their meeting with the congregational leadership, the Intervention Team will:

- Make it clear that no determination has yet been made and that an orderly investigation, review and adjudication of the matter is taking place.
- Provide explanation about the Policy and Procedures for Prevention of and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct that will be used in responding to this allegation, and about the process of providing follow-up information.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities for decision-making and action among the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia; the Regional Commission on Ministry, which grants standing to a minister; and the leaders in the local setting who maintain the authority to continue, terminate or suspend employment. The congregational leadership should be informed that the Regional Minister has the authority to temporarily suspend the accused minister’s standing pending the outcome of the adjudication process.
- Discuss with and assist the leadership in taking immediate steps that may be necessary to protect persons from potential abuse pending further investigation and adjudication of the allegation. (Depending on the nature and scope of the allegation, it may be necessary for the minister’s pastoral activity to be restricted or suspended while the allegation is investigated and adjudicated. When, after consultation, the employing congregation determines that suspension is necessary, it is recommended that the suspension be with pay and without prejudice, e.g., a “paid leave of absence.” The congregational leadership should be informed regarding their

potential liability for any further harm done by the accused during the investigation period.

- Determine, in consultation with the leadership of the congregation, 1) level of disclosure warranted, 2) what information should be disclosed, 3) who should be informed (e.g., selected leadership, elders, special committees, board, congregation), 4) when disclosure should be made, and 5) the means of disclosure. In any case, any information shared must be factual and should be limited as much as possible to the fact that an allegation of ministerial misconduct has been made and an investigation has commenced. If the allegation is proven, only such facts shall be disclosed as are required/needed.
- Encourage the leadership of the congregation to cooperate with the implementation of this policy.
- Make clear to the congregational leadership that any efforts on their part to bring the accuser and complainant(s) together to seek a resolution of issues without a full investigation and adjudication by the Regional Commission on Ministry and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia will undermine the possibility of justice, reconciliation and congregational health.
- Describe and offer assistance in accessing the resources that are available to assist the leadership in responding to the allegations and their impact upon the life of the congregation, the complainant and his/her family, the accused minister, and the minister's family.

E. Adjudication

1. Preliminary Hearing

Within 21 days of the receipt of the investigative report by the Commission on Ministry, a Preliminary Hearing will be held, unless the accused chooses to waive the Preliminary Hearing and move straight to a Formal Hearing. The primary purpose of the Preliminary Hearing is to allow the Investigative Team to present its report.

Prior to the Preliminary Hearing, the Regional Minister will provide the accused a written summary of the charges against him/her. The Chair of the Commission on Ministry will inform the accused of the process to be followed, and the possible outcomes from a Preliminary Hearing.

The Preliminary Hearing board will be made up of a simple majority (50% plus one) of the Commission on Ministry.

If the accused chooses to proceed with a Preliminary Hearing, the Chair of the Commission on Ministry will inform the accused of the date, time, and place of the hearing. The complainant shall also be informed and offered an opportunity to be present at the Preliminary Hearing. Both the complainant and the accused may be accompanied by an advocate to provide support, care and procedural guidance, but not to speak on behalf of the complainant or the accused.

a. If the minister admits culpability for the substance of the charge in the complaint, the Commission on Ministry has the following options:

- Accept resignation of his/her position.
- Permanently remove the minister's standing. If ministerial standing is removed, such action must be reported to appropriate employers as well as the Disciples Home Missions and the Office of Search and Call, and will be communicated to all Regions.²
- Suspend standing and require the minister to pay for and receive treatment by a therapist specializing in pastoral sexual misconduct, and to sign a release authorizing the therapist to communication with the Commission on Ministry regarding the case. This action must be reported to appropriate employers as well as the Disciples Home Missions and the Office of Search and Call, and will be communicated to all Regions.³
- Require the minister to confess wrongdoing and apologize to the victim and congregation.
- Require the minister to provide restitution for the victim (e.g., pay for counseling).

If therapy is undertaken, the possibility of reinstatement of ministerial standing of the perpetrator should be based upon his/her successfully reaching certain goals. They may include, but are not limited to: 1) understanding abuse of power; 2) understanding appropriate behavior regarding touch, 3) understanding the dynamics of manipulation, 4) being able to confess the offense, 5) demonstrating a sense of remorse and an understanding of the magnitude of the offense, 5) providing restitution to the victim, 6) examining intimacy needs and self-care, 7) learning how to establish healthy boundaries, both professional and personal, 8) addressing current family or marital issues, 9) exploring issues related to family of origin, 10) attending addiction treatment when appropriate. "Success" at achieving these or other stated goals will be determined by the therapist and will need to be communicated in a written report to the Commission on Ministry.

If loss of standing has occurred as a result of the Preliminary Hearing, successfully meeting these goals will not guarantee reinstatement of standing, but will be seen as necessary for consideration of such reinstatement by the Commission on Ministry.

If an agreement is reached, the Commission on Ministry will inform all parties (perpetrator, victim and congregation) in writing within 7 days of their action.

b. If the minister does not admit culpability or if negotiation fails to reach an agreed upon resolution, then the Commission on Ministry will proceed to conduct a Formal Hearing.

2. Formal Hearing

Within 30 days of a Preliminary Hearing which does not reach a resolution, or the waiving of such a hearing by the accused, a Formal Hearing will be required. At least 21 days before the hearing, the Chair of the Commission on Ministry will inform both the accused and the complainant, who will inform their witnesses, of the date, time and place of the hearing. The Chair of the Commission on Ministry will inform both parties of the process to be followed. In addition, a written statement of charges made by the complainant, as well as a written response by the accused, will be provided to the accused and the complainant. The Commission on Ministry will comprise the Hearing Board, with at least three-quarters of the members required to be present at the hearing in order for the Commission to act.

At the Formal Hearing, the Investigation Team will present their report. In addition, the accused, the complainant, and their witnesses may present statements and answer questions.

- a. It is important that a Formal Hearing be fair to all concerned, but it is not held to strict legal procedures. The Commission on Ministry will establish particular rules for the hearing and will demonstrate sensitivity in selecting the hearing meeting place.
- b. Since a Formal Hearing is an ecclesiastical and not a legal proceeding, neither the minister who is charged nor the complainant may be represented by legal counsel. Attorneys and officers of the secular court have no role within an ecclesiastical proceeding. However, both the accused and the complainant may select an advocate to provide support, care and procedural guidance, but who may not speak on behalf of the complainant or the accused.
- c. At the Formal Hearing, the Investigative Team will be responsible for presenting the case against the minister, including the calling of witnesses. The accused and complainant may also call witnesses.

- d. The minister who is charged has a right to be present during the complainant's testimony.
- e. The complainant has a right to be present during the accused minister's testimony.
- f. The Commission will use a standard of evidence like that of a civil legal proceeding (i.e., preponderance of the evidence, which means 51% certainty of the facts) rather than the standard for a criminal proceeding (i.e., beyond a reasonable doubt, which means 90% certainty of the facts). The criminal standard is much higher because it involves the possibility of incarceration of the offender. This ecclesial proceeding parallels a civil action; therefore, the standard of evidence is that which is used in civil actions.
- g. The Commission on Ministry, as the Hearing Board, will make a decision regarding the charges and recommend actions within ten (10) days of the Formal Hearing. Among the possible actions the Commission may recommend are:
 - Dismissal of all charges against the minister.
 - Acceptance of the minister's resignation of his/her position.
 - Permanent removal of the minister's standing. If ministerial standing is removed, such action must be reported to appropriate employers as well as the Disciples Home Missions and the Office of Search and Call, and will be communicated to all Regions.⁴
 - Suspend standing and require the minister to pay for and receive treatment by a therapist specializing in pastoral sexual misconduct, and to sign a release authorizing the therapist to communicate with the Commission on Ministry regarding the case. If ministerial standing is removed, such action must be reported to appropriate employers as well as the Disciples Home Missions and the Office of Search and Call, and will be communicated to all Regions.⁵
 - Require the minister to confess wrongdoing and apologize to the victim and congregation.
 - Require the minister to provide restitution for the victim (e.g., pay for counseling).

If therapy is undertaken, the possibility of reinstatement of ministerial standing of the perpetrator should be based upon his/her successfully reaching certain goals. They may include, but are not limited to:

1) understanding abuse of power; 2) understanding appropriate behavior regarding touch, 3) understanding the dynamics of manipulation, 4) being able to confess the offense, 5) demonstrating a sense of remorse and an understanding of the magnitude of the offense, 5) providing restitution to the victim, 6) examining intimacy needs and self-care, 7) learning how to establish healthy boundaries, both professional and personal, 8) addressing current family or marital issues, 9) exploring issues related to family of origin, 10) attending addiction treatment when appropriate.

“Success” at achieving these or other stated goals will be determined by the therapist and will need to be communicated in a written report to the Commission on Ministry.

If loss of standing has occurred as a result of the Formal Hearing, successfully meeting these goals will not guarantee reinstatement of standing, but will be seen as necessary for consideration of such reinstatement by the Commission on Ministry.

All decisions and rationales of the Commission will be recorded in the minister’s Investigative File. This file will be secured in the Office of the Regional Minister for a minimum of fifty (50) years. If ministerial standing is removed or suspended, such action must be reported to appropriate employers as well as the Disciples Home Missions and the Office of Search and Call, and will be communicated to all Regions.⁶ All parties (accuser, minister, and congregation) will be informed in writing of the outcome of the formal hearing within seven (7) days of a decision being rendered by the Regional Commission on Ministry. If the allegations have proven false, all records will be sealed, to be opened only in the event of civil or criminal proceedings, and the Commission on Ministry will negotiate professional pastoral care and counseling for the minister.

F. Right of Appeal

The purpose of the appeals process is to determine if, in response to a charge of Clergy Misconduct, procedural error occurred; and, if procedural error did occur, whether it rose to a level that offends the ecclesial and pastoral intent of the Policy and Procedures for Prevention of and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct. The appeals process is intended to promote healing for all parties involved.

An appeal does not include a rehearsal of the facts of the allegation.

The appellant is asked to follow the following steps:

1. Read and acknowledge receipt of Process for Appeal.

2. Review the areas of procedure outlined in the above document.

a. Identify which areas of procedure involved procedural error.

b. Define the procedural error succinctly in the available space on the Pro Forma Document that will be provided. Appellant may also attach additional supporting documentation directly related to the charge and response under consideration.

The Process for Appeal and the associated Pro Forma Document are attached in their entirety in Appendix B, below.

G. Restoration of Standing

If a person has had his/her ministerial standing suspended, he or she may apply to the Regional Commission on Ministry in writing after a period of thirty-six (36) months, requesting restoration of standing. The Commission on Ministry will consider the request at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

Persons whose standing has been permanently removed may not request restoration of standing.

Any application to have standing reinstated by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia will need to be supported by the following documentation:

- A letter to the Commission on Ministry from a licensed therapist/counselor, indicating the number of therapy sessions of therapy, the applicant's response to the incident of sexual misconduct leading to the termination of standing, the applicant's relationship with his/her family, the applicant's progress in dealing with the incident of sexual misconduct, and an opinion regarding the applicant's fitness to return to ministry.
- If therapy was undertaken, the possibility of reinstatement of ministerial standing of the perpetrator should be based upon his/her having successfully reached certain goals. They may include, but are not limited to: 1) understanding abuse of power; 2) understanding appropriate behavior regarding touch, 3) understanding the dynamics of manipulation, 4) being able to confess the offense, 5) demonstrating a sense of remorse and an understanding of the magnitude of the offense, 5) providing restitution to the victim, 6) examining intimacy needs and self-care, 7) learning how to establish healthy boundaries, both professional and personal, 8) addressing current family or marital issues, 9) exploring issues related to family of origin, 10) attending addiction treatment when appropriate. "Success" at achieving these or other stated goals will be determined by the therapist and will need to be communicated in a written report to the Commission on Ministry.

Successfully meeting these goals will not guarantee reinstatement of standing, but will be seen as necessary for consideration of such reinstatement by the Commission on Ministry.

- Results from psychological assessment for ministry conducted by the Pastoral Institute in Columbus, GA or other counseling resource approved by the Commission on Ministry.
- Completion of an approved workshop on clergy boundaries and sexual ethics which is at least one (1) day long. This requirement should have been met within one (1) year prior to the application for reinstatement of standing.
- A letter from the pastor of the congregation where the applicant has been worshipping, indicating level of activity and participation.
- A 3 – 5 page paper by the applicant discussing motivation for return to ministry and the sense of call within the life of the applicant.
- A personal interview of the applicant with the Commission on Ministry.
- Additional information, on a case by case basis, as may be required by the Commission.

If the Commission on Ministry decides that standing is to be restored, this decision will be reported to Disciples Home Missions and the Office of Search and Call, and will be communicated to all Regions.⁷ Records of any disciplinary action and restoration, if applicable, will remain in the minister's Investigative File in the Regional Office and, upon written request of the General Commission on Ministry, may be available to future employers.

H. Aftercare

1. In the case of a finding against the minister, the Commission on Ministry will negotiate professional pastoral care and counseling for the victim and immediate family. Every effort will be made to help the victim and immediate family move to wholeness and health as the recognized victims of the clergy misconduct.

In addition, the members of the Intervention Team will continue to work with the congregation in order that specific mechanisms and counseling be in place to assist the congregation in moving forward. In all such cases, every effort will be made to help the congregation move to wholeness and health, as they, too, must be recognized as victims of the clergy misconduct.

2. In the case of clergy exoneration, the Commission on Ministry, in consultation with the Regional Minister, will negotiate professional pastoral care and counseling for the minister and his/her family, as necessary.

In addition, the members of the Intervention Team will continue to work with the congregation in order that specific mechanisms and counseling be in place to assist the congregation in moving forward. In all such cases, every effort will be made to help the congregation move to wholeness and health.

SECTION V: PREVENTION AND AWARENESS

A. Introduction

Education and training in the prevention of clergy sexual misconduct is a key element in a healthy church, as manifested in congregations and in the Region. Appropriate education enhances understanding of ministerial ethics, congregation policy, and accountability. Training is essential to those who serve as clergy and Regional leaders; as members of Response, Investigation, and Intervention Teams; and as members of the Commission on Ministry.

Likewise, education of congregations, while neither as specific nor as extensive, is a critical component of prevention. Congregants who understand boundaries and clergy ethical standards are much more likely to experience the healthy fellowship which they seek in a church; similarly, they are better equipped to discern what is appropriate behavior of church leaders, whether lay or clergy. Naturally, children are always to be protected. Congregations that are educated know what procedures and policies to have in place to ensure that their congregations are safe for all.

Therefore, education and training as matters of policy will allow the Region to achieve responsible awareness and prevention of clergy misconduct, and to ensure the appropriate standards of safety and clergy ethics for churches, organizations, related institutions, and ministries throughout the Region. Congregations and organizations may choose whether to avail themselves of the resources of the Region in order to meet such standards; but education and training of clergy and Regional leaders is neither elective nor optional.

B. Education and Training

1. Clergy and Seminarians

It shall be the policy of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia to REQUIRE training in the prevention of clergy sexual misconduct for all ordained and commissioned clergy seeking to obtain or maintain ministerial standing.

All clergy – ordained, licensed or commissioned – shall complete a standard training program consisting of a minimum of one (1) full day, as outlined by the Commission on Ministry. This training shall be provided at least once each calendar year; to accommodate schedules and distances over which clergy must travel, the Commission shall make every effort to provide this training two (2)

times per year and in two different geographical areas of the Region (e.g., metro Atlanta and South/Central Georgia) yearly.

All clergy will be required to complete the standard training as outlined by the Commission on Ministry at least once every five (5) years. The Regional Office will advise all clergy of this requirement and will establish and maintain records to ensure that it is met.

It shall be the duty and responsibility of each member of the clergy to register for and complete that training in accordance with the policy of the Commission on Ministry. Variations and exceptions, if allowed, shall be made only by the Commission on Ministry.

Furthermore, training in the prevention of clergy sexual misconduct is a requirement for seminarians seeking ordination and for persons seeking licensing or commissioning as ministers. Retired clergy not serving in interim or pastoral roles are excepted from the requirement to complete the course every 5 years in order to maintain standing.

2. Commission on Ministry

All members of the Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia shall complete the standard training program in the prevention of clergy misconduct offered for clergy and seminarians. A member of the Commission who has not completed this training must participate in the training at the first opportunity it is offered during his/her term of service on the Commission.

3. Persons Charged with Response

It shall be the policy of the Commission on Ministry that all persons who serve in any role in the triage, intervention, investigation, and/or adjudication of any incident in which clergy misconduct is alleged, complete the standard training in the prevention of clergy misconduct as provided for clergy, seminarians, and the Commission on Ministry prior to serving in such role. All members of an appointed Response Team, whether serving on the Investigation or Intervention Team, shall have completed this one-day training, as well as additional training specific to their Response Team responsibilities.

4. Regional Leaders

All persons who serve on the Regional Board who have not completed the training in the prevention of clergy misconduct as provided for clergy, seminarians, the Commission on Ministry, and the Response Team shall complete an abbreviated “awareness training” of at least one-half day. This training shall include the basic principles of the standard one-day training

curriculum and shall be offered annually by the Commission on Ministry. This awareness training shall be offered to all who serve in on the Regional Board or in other Regional leadership roles.

5. Congregations

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia will offer resources, materials and assistance to congregations for the development of safe church policies. It shall be the policy of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia, as a part of its commitment to awareness and prevention of clergy sexual misconduct and placing a priority on safe churches, to encourage every congregation to create and implement a “safe church” policy aimed at awareness, prevention and response to misconduct by ANY person serving within the congregation, whether as lay or clergy.

Further, it shall be the policy of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia to offer a workshop, seminar or interest session at each Regional Assembly to provide information and available resources regarding the creation of such a congregational policy. (See Appendix C for a sample policy.)

C. Curriculum for Training in the Prevention of Clergy Misconduct

Training for all persons should include information on sexual ethics, power and vulnerability, boundaries, and prevention and self-care.

(An example of such training is available through the Faith Trust Institute in Seattle, Washington, found at www.faithtrustinstitute.org.)

This type of training program generally is delivered most effectively in a format of one (1) full day; it shall be the policy of the Commission on Ministry to offer the scheduled training accordingly.

The curriculum for the “awareness training,” described above, shall be an abbreviated training program incorporating the essential elements of the day-long curriculum, and shall be offered in a single half-day session format.

D. Expenses

The Commission on Ministry will ensure that a fee schedule be established to cover the expenses of the training program, including materials, meals, and trainer fees. Other expenses may include rent for training space for the group, individual travel and accommodations, and miscellaneous expenses. Payment of fees and other expenses shall be the responsibility of the participants in the education and training program.

E. Implementation

It will be the responsibility of the Region to provide specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers with standing in the Region.⁸ The authority of the Commission on Ministry is clearly established for the administration of the Policy and Procedures for the Prevention of and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct of Persons Engaged in Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia.

The Commission on Ministry, in establishing these requirements for awareness and training, shall also create suitable communication methods to ensure that all who are affected by these requirements are notified and advised of the requirements. Those who are mandated to complete training shall acknowledge receipt of the requirements, and that acknowledgement will be kept on permanent record.

The Commission shall also establish a schedule, including dates, times and locations of education and training programs, and shall publish the schedule through all appropriate publications at least six (6) months in advance of the education and training programs.

SECTION VI: GUIDELINES FOR CLERGY DATING RELATIONSHIPS

The following guidelines/policies pertain to appropriate and acknowledged dating relationships involving clergy.

1. **Appropriate Dating Relationship:** A loving, caring and respectful relationship between consenting adults engaged in a dating relationship, where professional boundaries and power issues are clearly understood and maintained. Because of the subtlety of power abuse issues in clergy relationships, it is inadvisable and inappropriate for a clergy person to engage persons within his/her parish or professional relationships in a dating relationship. Because clear boundaries must be maintained, it is therefore inappropriate and inadvisable for the clergy person and non-clergy person to continue to participate in the same parish or congregation which the minister serves.
2. **Acknowledged Dating Relationship:** A loving, caring, respectful and ongoing and acknowledged relationship between consenting adults engaged in a dating relationship. In the interest of ensuring that all parties are adequately informed, it is recommended that once an ongoing dating relationship has been established, the clergy person inform his/her Pastor, Supervisor, or Moderator of his/her board of the relationship.

NOTES

¹ *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, adopted by 2009 General Assembly, p. 39.

² *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

³ *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

⁴ *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

⁵ *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

⁶ *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

⁷ *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

⁸ *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

APPENDIX A

Definitions

A. **Ordained Minister:** A person who holds ordained ministerial standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). An Ordained Minister is one type of minister within the context of this policy.

B. **Minister:** A person engaged by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to carry out or operate in ministry. Within the context of this policy, “minister” includes ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers as well as elected or appointed leaders, employees and recognized volunteers of a church or church affiliated organization.

C. **Regional Commission on Ministry:** This commission, whose chair is elected by the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia, and whose members are appointed by the chair and the Regional Minister and confirmed by the Regional Executive Committee, certifies ministerial standing for ordained, licensed, and commissioned Disciples ministers in the Region. The commission also provides care and nurture to those seeking ordained or commissioned ministerial standing, as well as those who are currently serving in ministry, such as ministry employees, missionaries, military chaplains, and ecumenical ministers.

D. **Ministerial Standing:** Certification by the Regional Commission on Ministry that an ordained, licensed or commissioned minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry. The ministry may be within a calling body such as a church, organization, or related institution or ministry, and can be on an occasional, part-time or full-time basis. Continuous accountability is maintained with the calling body.

E. **Employer:** The church, organization, related institution or ministry that calls a minister to carry out a particular ministry.

F. **Investigative File:** The collective body of materials used by the Regional Commission on Ministry to determine the merits of an allegation of clergy sexual misconduct. The file is confidential and secured with the Office of Regional Minister for a minimum of fifty (50) years.

G. **Ministerial Relationship:** The relationship between one whose role and identity is as a minister carrying out the ministry of the church, and one who is being served by the minister. The ministerial relationship exists when the minister is in a position of influence, power and authority relative to others, including parishioners, clients, students, colleagues, volunteers, and other pastors.

H. Complainant

Within the context of the process of investigation and adjudication of allegations of sexual misconduct on the part of ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia, a Complainant is defined as any person who initiates a verbal complaint or submits a signed written complaint with specifics of alleged clergy sexual misconduct to the Regional Minister (or Chair of the Commission on Ministry). The complainant may or may not be the alleged victim. For the purposes of this document, the term complainant is also understood to include the alleged victim. After the investigation process is underway, the complainant is understood to be the alleged victim or, in the case of a minor, his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

APPENDIX B

CLERGY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR RESPONSE

Appeals Process

1. Receipt of Request for Appeal
2. Formal Response from the Regional Board
 - a. Appellant is provided Summary Process Document
 - b. Appellant is provided Pro Forma Document
3. Receipt of Appeals Process Documentation
4. Appointment of Appeals Subcommittee
 - a. Regional Minister
 - b. Moderator
 - c. Three (3) Regional Board Members
5. Charge to Subcommittee
 - a. Review of Appeals Process Documentation
 - i. Initial Appeal Request
 - ii. Appeals Document
 - iii. Report of Investigation Team
 - iv. Initial Report of Misconduct
 - b. Report of Findings
 - i. Finding of Procedural Error – significant error that in the opinion of the committee rises to a level that offends the ecclesial spirit and purpose of the policy
 - ii. Finding of No Procedural Error
 - iii. Finding of No contradictory Error – error that in the opinion of the committee is not offensive to the ecclesial spirit of the policy
 - c. Recommendations for Finding of Error
 - i. Pastoral Care (Accused/Accuser/Victim)
 - ii. Ministry Care (Congregation)
 - iii. Education
 - d. Submission in Writing to the Executive Committee (electronic submission acceptable)
 - i. Documentation of Process
 - ii. Report of Findings
 - iii. Recommendations for Care
 - e. Time Frames
 - i. Subcommittee will have up to thirty (30) days to complete their work.
 - ii. One fifteen (15) day extension, with written notice to principal parties and the Executive Committee
6. Delivery of Subcommittee Report to the Executive Committee
 - a. Notification to the Principal Parties
 - b. Notification to the Regional Board
 - c. Notification to the Commission on Ministry

Pro Forma Document

The purpose of this appeals process is to determine if, in response to a charge Clergy Sexual Misconduct, procedural error occurred; and if procedural error occurred, whether it rose to a level that offends the ecclesial and pastoral intent of the Policy and Procedures for Response to and Prevention of Clergy Sexual Misconduct. Further this process is intended to promote healing for all parties involved.

This review is not a rehearsal of the facts of the allegation.

The person requesting the appeal is asked to follow the steps outlined below:

1. Read and acknowledge receipt of the appeals process.
2. Review the areas of procedure.
 - a. Identify areas which contain procedural error.
 - b. Define the procedural error succinctly in the space provided to give a succinct answer. The appellant may also attach supporting documentation directly related to the charge and response under consideration.

Acknowledgement:

I have received and read the appeals process.

Signed

Date

RESPONSE PROCEDURE

Alleged Error		Area of Response Procedure
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	DISCOVERY
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	INVESTIGATION

APPENDIX C

Sample

Safe Church Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

As a community of Christian faith, (Name of Local Church) is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. All persons associated with (Name of Local Church) should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention of the church to take action in an attempt to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Ministerial Conduct

Consistent with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers, all authorized ministers, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders, and authorized volunteers are Ministers to the congregation.

It is important that all Ministers to the church be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and to understand the ways in which their use or misuse of authority may impact others.

It is the policy of (Name of Local Church) to encourage its Ministers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, maintenance of appropriate boundaries, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment of parishioners or others by anyone engaged in ministry on behalf of (Name of Local Church) is unethical behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry

- Before beginning their duties, all Ministers will submit a disclosure form similar to the sample attached hereto as Exhibit A.
- Before beginning their duties, all Ministers will be personally interviewed to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the position they seek.
- The church will conduct a registered sex offender review for each Minister by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopw.gov.
- Authorized Ministers of the church will attend all clergy misconduct prevention workshops required by (Name of Region, Association or Conference), or will attend at least one workshop on this topic every three (3) years, whichever is more frequent.

Additional Requirements for Child and Youth Ministry

(Name of Local Church) is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to promote this, we have established the following guidelines in addition to the general requirements for ministry to the church.

- We expect that those who volunteer to work with minors will have been members of (Name of Local Church) for at least six (6) months or, if not members, regularly and frequently associated with (Name of Local Church) for at least a year.
- All volunteers who regularly work with children and youth will complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to the sample attached hereto as Exhibit B.
- Before beginning their duties, all prospective employees will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and a criminal history verification by a third party vendor.
- All volunteers and employees who regularly work with children and youth will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures.
- It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for youth activities. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other, there will be no fewer than two unrelated adults present with children. Youth over the age of _____ (*establish minimum age*) may assist an unrelated adult in supervising children and youth activities; however, such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two unrelated adults be present.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property, and any overnight activities.

Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment

- Attach - (Name of Local Church) Policy and Procedure here.
- For further details and other options on Sample Safe Church Policies see the following;

www.ucc.org/ministers/safe/SafeChurchPolicy.pdf

www.macucc.org/pages/detail/2166

www.svpc.us/difference/safechurch.php

EXHIBIT A

**(Name of Local Church)
Authorized Volunteer
Application and Disclosure Form**

Name: Last **First** **Middle**

Address: Street **City/State** **Zip Code**

Daytime Phone **Evening Phone** **Email**

References: One reference should be related to you and the other references should not be related to you.

1. _____
Name

Street **City/State** **Zip Code**

Phone **Email**

2. _____
Name

Street **City/State** **Zip Code**

Phone **Email**

3. _____
Name

Street **City/State** **Zip Code**

Phone **Email**

I have been a member of this church since _____

I have been a friend of this church since _____

I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a crime. (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state.)

Q Not True

Q True

If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Q Yes

Q No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty to amend in a timely fashion the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that any response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, is no longer accurate.

Beginning relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize (Name of Local Church) and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

(Name of Local Church)'s authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit for, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and the program in which I am seeking to participate. To that end, I authorize (Name of Local Church) and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that (Name of Local Church) will share with me any information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the (Name of Local Church) Safe Church Policy.

(SIGNATURE)

DATE

(PRINTED NAME)

IF APPLICANT IS UNDER 18:

(SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN)

DATE

(PRINTED NAME)

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopw.gov) review performed on _____
- Personal interview conducted by staff on _____
- Reference inquiries completed on _____

I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a crime. (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state)

True

Not True

If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.

True

Not True

If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.)

I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.

True

Not True

If not true, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.)

Do you have a valid drivers' license?

Yes

No

With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five (5) years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

True

Not True

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize (Name of Local Church) and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

(Name of Local Church) authorized volunteer and employee recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize (Name of Local Church) and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that (Name of Local Church) will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the (Name of Local Church) Safe Church Policy.

(PRINT NAME & SIGN) **DATE**

(PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18) **DATE**

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopw.gov) review performed on _____
- Personal interview conducted by staff on _____
- Reference inquiries completed on _____
- Church membership for 6 mos. or association for 1 year confirmed on _____
- Safe church awareness training and policy orientation performed on _____

Additionally, if considered for employment:

- Criminal History Verification and Fair Credit Reporting Act notices, completed on _____